

Birds in the hot season along the Nile in the Sudanese eastern Sahara

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In autumn 1986 an ICBP-supported expedition investigated the importance of the upper Lake Nasser area around Wadi Halfa (21°55'N, 31°20'E), Sudan, particularly for migratory birds in late summer and early autumn. The three main objectives were:

1. to investigate the species of Palaearctic migrants and their relative numbers at a site along the Nile at an approximate mid-way stage through the eastern Sahara;
2. to assess the importance of Lake Nasser as a habitat for migrant and resident waterbirds;
3. to check on visible White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* migration at this point along the Nile.

These three topics, as well as some other points of ornithological interest, are being discussed elsewhere. Here we are concerned with a brief account of all the species recorded during our visit to the area, with a brief statement on their numbers and status.

A camp was established on the eastern shore of the lake within c. 200 m of a large area of *Tamarix* scrub on 24 August. Before leaving on 22 September we twice had to move on to higher ground as the level of the lake rose. Throughout the period there was little cloud and no rain, and rather dusty conditions on a few days of *Khamsin* winds. Full moon was on 18 September. It was generally very hot with day maxima ranging from 42° to over 50°C. On 10–11 September a short trip was made with local fishermen to Argeen (21°59'N, 31°18'E) on the west bank of the lake on the Egyptian border, where a small stream with *Phragmites* swamp and old *Tamarix* trees enters the lake.

Birds, particularly migrants, were prolific around the permanent camp-site, and their numbers were estimated daily in an area of c. 500 m radius. Mist nets were used to catch, weigh, assess lipid levels, and ring a daily sample of migrants, but the number of nets in use varied depending mainly on the numbers of birds being caught and the temperature. Nets were closed if more birds were being caught than could be processed within 30 min, and always closed 2½ h after dawn; some were frequently reopened at various times during the day and for 1½ h before dark. On some nights nets were operated for various periods in order to check on the fall-out time of night migrants.

Annotated list of species

We follow the nomenclature and systematic order used by Nikolaus (1987) in which the new distribution data obtained during this visit have been incorporated. Our observations have been checked against the distributions summarized in *The Birds of Africa* (Brown *et al.* 1982, Urban *et al.* 1986, Fry *et al.* 1988) and *Birds of the western Palearctic* (Cramp 1985, 1988, Cramp & Simmons 1977, 1980, 1983), as a result of which interesting range extensions have been revealed and are indicated under the relevant species accounts below.

White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* Single adults on 8 and 12 Sep, most likely to be of Palaearctic origin.

Pink-backed Pelican *P. rufescens* Daily, usually 15–20; a distribution which does not conform with Brown *et al.* (1982).

Darter *Anhinga rufa* One on 26 Aug was far north of the range given in Brown *et al.* (1982).

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* Flock of 17 on 26 Aug arrived c. 09:00 hrs; 3 on 31 Aug.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* Daily, usually 10–20, once 25. Evidence of visible southward migration of small groups of birds.

Purple Heron *A. purpurea* 1–22 on seven days, 30 Aug–13 Sep, usually involved birds in parties flying south in the evenings.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* 2 on 30 Aug, 1 on 17 Sep.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* Up to 60 feeding in the area on 13 days in Sep.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* Daily up to over 200, probably all local residents where they breed commonly on islets. At least 2 pulli present 7 Sep.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* Heard daily, usually in the evenings and early mornings, and often at night, flying southwards. Seen in flocks of 50 or more at times.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* 200 arrived at 14:40 hrs on 23 Aug and departed south in thermal at 08:55 next day. 500 in morning of 29 Aug left south 10:00–10:30. 1–6 occasionally on other days. The main passage appears to be further east.

Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis* Daily up to 90. This is well to the north of its known distribution shown by Brown *et al.* (1982) and Nikolaus (1987).

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* 1–3 on 4 days, 25 Aug–7 Sep.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* 1–17 on 13 days were presumably southward bound Palaearctic birds, for which there are several ringing recoveries in the Sudan (Nikolaus 1987).

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber* 2 on 3 and 5 Sep. Probably mainly coastal in this region (*vide* Brown *et al.* (1982), Cramp & Simmons (1977), Nikolaus (1987)).

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus* Daily, 150–300.

Pintail *Anas acuta* 17, 41 and 3 on 19–21 Sep respectively.

Shoveler *A. clypeata* 4 on 13 Sep.

Garganey *A. querquedula* On most days in variable numbers, up to 600. More than 200 on 5 days.

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* Daily up to 20, but up to 50 from mid Sep, presumably indicating new arrivals from the Palaearctic (Nikolaus 1984).

Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus* 1 on 13 Sep.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* 1–6 on 12 days throughout; 6 on 20 Sep. Most flew S/SSE over the lake or near the shore.

Montagu's Harrier *C. pygargus* 1–3 on 5 days from 5 Sep, included two adult males and 'ringtails' which appeared to be this species.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* Daily up to 10, but 40 on 24 Aug.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* One on 30 Aug and 3 Sep.

Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus* 1–2 on 6 days to 1 Sep.

Saker Falcon *F. cherrug* 1–2 on 13 days throughout are much earlier dates than those given in Brown *et al.* (1982).

Sooty Falcon *F. concolor* 1–2 on 9 days. These, as well as the above two species of falcons, actively sought night migrants soon after dawn.

Kestrel *F. tinnunculus* 1 on 21 Sep.

Quail *Coturnix coturnix* 1 on 7 Sep.

Harlequin Quail *C. delegorguei* A male netted on 27 Aug (wing 99 mm, weight 65.0 g). This bird, on the boundary of the Palaearctic, is the most northerly recorded.

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* 1–3 on 4 days from 8 Sep.

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana* 1–3 on 5 days from 2 Sep.

Little Crake *P. parva* Singly on 25 Aug and 1 Sep.

Coot *Fulica atra* One 18–21 Sep.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* 1–4 on 6 days.

Little Ringed Plover *C. dubius* 3 at Argeen on 11 Sep. This area is outside that shown on the distribution map in Urban *et al.* (1986).

Ringed Plover *C. hiaticula* 1–10 on 19 days.

Great Sandplover *C. leschenaultii* 1–2 daily 10–13 Sep. Nikolaus (1987) gives only one previous inland record for the Sudan.

Kittlitz's Sandplover *C. pecuarius* Common daily, 40–60 often.

Spur-winged Plover *Vanellus spinosus* Daily, up to 140, and breeding.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* Up to 15 in Aug, then 5 or fewer in Sep.

Curlew *Numenius arquata* One on 8 Sep.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* 1–5 on 13 days, but only twice after 5 Sep.

Greenshank *T. nebularia* Daily, up to 15.

Green Sandpiper *T. ochropus* Singly on 5 days.

Marsh Sandpiper *T. stagnatilis* 1–4 on 9 days and 20 on 31 Aug.

Redshank *T. totanus* 1–4 on most days.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* One on 8 and 17 Sep.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina* One on 15 Sep.

Curlew Sandpiper *C. ferruginea* 1–4 on 5 days.

Little Stint *C. minuta* Daily up to 100, except 11–14 Sep when 200.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* 1–6 on 8 days.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* On most days, up to 30.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* Up to 40 to 5 Sep, then 5 or fewer.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* One on 1 Sep, 3 on 10 Sep. Not mapped along the White Nile north of Khartoum by Urban *et al.* (1986).

Senegal Thicknee *Burhinus senegalensis* 1–3 on 10 days.

Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor* Up to 14 on 12 days.

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* 10 on 1 Sep, 3 on 19 Sep. The overwintering record of 5000 birds in Sudan in Urban *et al.* (1986), although close to the border, is an error for Ethiopia (Ash 1977).

Common Pratincole *G. pratincola* One on 31 Aug, 2 on 17 Sep. The 3000 recorded overwintering in Nikolaus (1987) should read 5000 (Ash 1977).

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* One on 12 Sep, 47 on 19 Sep.

Little Gull *L. minutus* An immature bird flew south on 17 Sep, the first inland record for the Sudan.

Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus* Two on 5 Sep.

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* On most days, up to 100 on 6 Sep and then 50 or fewer.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* 1–2 on 3 days to 10 Sep.

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* On most days to 2 Sep when 132 counted, then up to 20 on 12 days. These may have been referable to *S. a. saundersi*. Urban *et al.* (1986) regard the two races *S. a. albifrons* and *S. a. saundersi* as distinct species, but have confused the distribution of the two: e.g., by including Lake Turkana in northern Kenya in the text for *albifrons*, but by showing it only on the map for *saundersi*, whereas Britton (1980) and Lewis & Pomeroy (1989) state that this population is *saundersi*.

Caspian Tern *S. caspia* Two on 2 Sep, 3 on 4 Sep.

Common Tern *S. hirundo* 1–7 on 8 days to 10 Sep, which are further evidence for an overland Nile/Rift valley passage, in association with two other Nile valley records in Cramp (1985) and Nikolaus (1987). All these records are additional to those given in Urban *et al.* (1986).

African Skimmer *Rynchops flavirostris* Daily up to 156 to 8 Sep, thereafter not more than 80. An adult ringed on 25 Aug was caught by a fisherman at Abu Rakhm (13°40N, 34°26E), 1000 km SSE in Sudan, on 25 Oct 1986; the first definite evidence of migration on this scale.

Crowned Sandgrouse *Pterocles coronatus* Two on 9 Sep. 61 at Argeen on 11 Sep; a slight extension of range to that mapped in Urban *et al.* (1986).

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* Two on 2 Sep, then >30 daily from 8 Sep.

Desert Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo ascalaphus* Singly on 25 Aug, 12 and 19 Sep.

Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius* Daily, up to 7, extending the distribution given in Fry *et al.* (1988).

Eurasian Nightjar *C. europaeus* Singly on 7, 9 and 17 Sep.

Eurasian Swift *Apus apus* Two on 15 Sep, one on 18 Sep, judged to be this species.

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis* Two on 3 Sep and 1–2 daily from 16 Sep. It is actually well distributed along the Nile in northern Sudan (Nikolaus 1987), where only one record is mapped in Fry *et al.* (1988).

Eurasian Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* One on 14 and 17–21 Sep, 3 on 16 Sep. An uncommon visitor along the Nile in the far north.

Eurasian Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* Fairly often heard, but only occasionally seen, flying south (once east) very high on calm days (possibly inaudible on windy days); >100 on 7 Sep, 4 parties on 17 Sep, >100 on 18 Sep, 1 party on 19 Sep.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops* One on 6 and 15 Sep.

Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* One on 16 Sep.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* Three on 16–18 Sep, 30 on 19 Sep, 60 on 21 Sep.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* Very common, up to 100 present, but fluctuating numbers suggested (local) movements.

African Rock Martin *Hirundo fuligula* On most days up to 20 pale birds. Feeding young in nest in Wadi Halfa on 24 and 27 Sep.

Eurasian Swallow *H. rustica* Few to 11 Sep (max. 13), then 100–200 often and 1000 on 17 Sep, 5000 on 18 Sep and 2000 on 19 Sep.

African Sand Martin *Riparia paludicola* One on 18 Sep, at the northern extreme of its African range.

Sand Martin *R. riparia* Up to 5 on 5 days from 3 Sep as well as 50 on 7 Sep and 25 on 13 Sep, thereafter 200–300 to 19 Sep and 1500 on 18 Sep and 750 on 19 Sep.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* 1–2 on 4 days, 3–21 Sep. Argeen: 7 on 10 Sep, 4 on 11 Sep.

Brown-necked Raven *Corvus ruficollis* Daily, up to 40.

Rufous Bush Chat *Cercotrichas galactotes* Singly on 27, 30 and 31 Aug.

Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* One on 31 Aug. Another next day was either this or *L. luscinia*.

Sprosser *Luscinia luscinia* Singly on 26 Aug, 2 and 4 Sep.

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* Singly on 4 days from 18 Sep.

Isabelline Wheatear *O. isabellina* 1–3 most days from 2 Sep.

Northern Wheatear *O. oenanthe* One on 30 Aug, then 1–3 on 10 days.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* Singly 29 Aug and 17 and 18 Sep; 2 on 19 Sep.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* 1–4 on 14 days throughout.

Marsh Warbler *A. palustris* Up to 10 on most days to 31 Aug, then 1–3 on 4 days to 7 Sep.

Sedge Warbler *A. schoenobaenus* Daily up to 60, except for 200 on 2 Sep; otherwise no obvious peak. An adult ringed on 5 Sep (weight 9.5 g) was found dying on 22 Apr 1987 at Eskisehir, Turkey (39°46'N, 30°30'E). The mean weight of 451 birds was 12.5 g (range 8.5–16.5 g).

Reed Warbler *A. scirpaceus* 150–500 daily throughout. Peaks on 30 Aug, and 2, 4 and 17 Sep. An adult female ringed on 11 Sep (weight 14.5 g) was controlled on 18 Jul 1988 at Lake Balaton, Hungary (46°43'N, 17°15'E). The mean weight of 1364 birds was 12.4 g (range 7.5–16.0 g).

Clamorous Reed Warbler *A. stentoreus* Two nominate *stentoreus* at Argeen on 11 Sep, and another heard singing, are the first records from inland Sudan and are presumably an extension of the population breeding along the Nile in Egypt. Much further south, at Abu Gussi, on the Nile near Debba (17°19'N, 31°17'E) three birds seen in the field appeared to be the same species.

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* One on 9 Sep.

Olivaceous Warbler *H. pallida* Up to 30 daily to 29 Aug, then on most days 5 or fewer. Further north at Abu Simbel passage was heavy 15–17 Aug.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* Up to 10 almost daily throughout. The mean weight of 54 birds was 14.0 g (range 11.0–18.5 g).

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* Up to 15 daily except 30 on 15 Sep and 50 on 18 Sep.

Stripe-backed Prinia *Prinia gracilis* Common resident, >10 daily. Newly fledged pulli on 24 Aug, and 1 new-laid egg on 27 Aug.

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* Singly on 25 Aug, 18 and 19 Sep.

Whitethroat *S. communis* One on 31 Aug and 5 Sep, 2 on 6 Sep.

Lesser Whitethroat *S. curruca* The second most numerous migrant. Daily; up to 70 to 2 Sep, up to 200 to 12 Sep, then up to 500 on 4 days. 1000 at Argeen on 10 Sep. An adult ringed on 6 Sep (weight 10.0 g) was shot on 13 Sep 1987 at Sidi Kreir (21°55'N, 31°20'E), 30 km SW of Alexandria, Egypt; an adult ringed on 17 Sep was found long dead on 28 Jun 1987 at Marcal River (47°19'N, 17°13'E), near Kemenesmagasi, Hungary. The mean weight of 845 birds was 11.8 g (range 8.0–15.5 g).

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* Singly on 14 Aug and 7 and 14 Sep, then 1–4 daily. A first-year bird ringed on 16 Sep (weight 14.0 g) was found in the market at Damascus (c. 33°30'N, 36°19'E), Syria, in autumn 1988.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* Two on 8 Sep.

Tree Pipit *A. trivialis* Singly 29 Aug, and 18 and 19 Sep.

African Pied Wagtail *Motacilla aguimp* 1–3 most days, but 10 on 7 Sep and 8 on 19 Sep.

Yellow Wagtail *M. flava* Up to 25, but on most days 10 or fewer. Up to 150 at Argeen on 10–11 Sep.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* 1–2 on 13 days in Sep.

Lesser Grey Shrike *L. minor* Singly on 2, 3, 13 and 18 Sep.

Nubian Shrike *L. nubicus* 1–5 on 12 days from 6 Sep.

Woodchat Shrike *L. senator* One on 19 Sep. One on 10 Sep at Argeen.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* Daily, up to 100.

Pale Rock Sparrow *Petronia brachydactyla* One on 18 and 19 Sep. This is far to the north of its usual range.

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New publication

Kenya Birds is a new twice-a-year A5-sized publication of the ICBP-Kenya section and the National Museums of Kenya's Ornithological Department. Dated June 1992, volume 1, number 1—a 28-page issue—has just been published. Edited by Leon Bennun, Cecilia Gichuki and John Fanshawe, **Kenya Birds** “will take a popular look at birds, birding and bird conservation in Kenya. It incorporates and expands on “Avifauna News”, the newsletter of the Department of Ornithology...”

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